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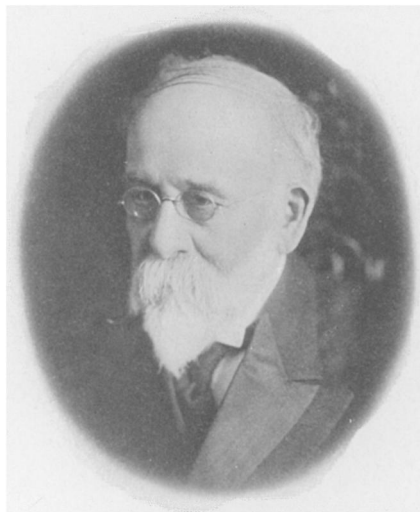
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BRIEFER ARTICLES

CHARLES EDWIN BESSEY

(WITH PORTRAIT)

In the history of American botany the name of CHARLES E. BESSEY will always hold a conspicuous place. When his first textbook (*Botany for High Schools and Colleges*) appeared in 1880, it introduced a new era in botanical instruction in this country. Before that date, the study of botany in the United States was bounded practically by the taxonomy of the higher plants, with such gross morphology as enabled the student to use a manual. BESSEY's *Botany* brought the atmosphere of SACH's



Lehrbuch to American colleges, and this compelled the development of botanical laboratories. This original textbook was the first of a series of texts that continued to be very influential.

Professor BESSEY was a most stimulating teacher, and perhaps no American botanist has left his mark upon so many students. Especially in government service and in agricultural colleges are these students to be found, for the teacher believed that his science should be directed toward the public service. At the same time, he was uncompromising in his views as to the difference between botany as a science and its various practical applications.

He was born in Milton, Ohio, May 21, 1845; received his Bachelor's degree at Michigan Agricultural College in 1869; and subsequently studied at Harvard University. He held only two academic positions as professor of botany: the first at Iowa State College (1870-1884), and the second at the University of Nebraska (1884-1915), where he

served also as dean and at various times as acting chancellor. He died at Lincoln, Nebraska, February 25, 1915.

He was a member of many scientific societies, and was very active in promoting their interests. His colleagues recognized his great services by electing him to various important offices. Among these offices were vice-president of Section F of the American Association, a position which he filled four times, (1893, 1894, 1902, 1907); president of the Botanical Society of America (1896); and president of the American Association (1910).

Aside from his preparation of textbooks, his special interests as an investigator were the fungi, the flora of the Great Plains, plant migration, and the relationships of plant families. His later publications dealt with "plant phyla," the last upon this subject appearing in January 1914. These studies of the relationships involved a laborious assembling and comparison of material that few would care to undertake, and the conclusions as to classification were far from stereotyped. For example, instead of the conventional four great groups of plants, Professor BESSEY presented the plant kingdom in fourteen "phyla."

In addition to textbooks and papers upon the special subjects referred to, Professor BESSEY was a regular reviewer of botanical literature for *Science*, so that he was in continual contact with those interested in his subject. His reviews were characteristic of the man, for they were always kindly. Apparently he searched for the pleasant things to say, and left the unpleasant things unsaid.

The botanical fraternity of this country will miss the presence of Professor BESSEY keenly, for his frequent attendance upon scientific meetings made him well known personally to all botanists, and his very genial nature made friends of all his colleagues.—J. M. C.